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582 671 purposes. If the figures can be given credence, they indicate a remarkable advance over the situation existing two years earlier. After an investigation of Marriage Law implementation in 1952, a woman minister of justice, Shih Liang, reported that in only three of the country's 2,086 counties were families reformed up to perfect Communist standards, and that in the East and Central-South regions freely contracted marriages and other reforms had gained no acceptance with the people.[22]

582 671 762 674 A further study of figures issued by Communist sources indicates that the regime did not have exact knowledge of the situation in many areas. To cite one example, an announcement of the results of the 1952 investigation of Marriage Law implementation include "incomplete statistics" on deaths attributed to the existence of problems and mistreatment connected with the "feudal family" system. According to these figures, 4,105 women were killed or driven to suicide in the East China Region between January and August 1952; and 356 women and 161 young men suffered the same fate in the Northwest Region during the first half of 1952. In lieu of figures for the Central-South Region, the report mentioned 606 young men and

22. China News Analysis, Hong Kong, No. 5, p. 3.

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582 women met violent deaths as a result of marriage disputes in 39 hsien (out of a total of 86) in Hunan.[23]

674 It seems reasonable to assume that the figures are incomplete and the categories not comparable because the Communists had no more accurate material to offer. If the incidence of violence in connection with marital and family disputes is truly reflected in these figures, their extension into yearly rates shows these deaths occurred at the rate of less than two per hundred-thousand population in the Northwest Region, less than four per hundred-thousand in the East China Region, and less than nine per hundred-thousand in Hunan. It should be remembered, however, that these ratios are based on incomplete figures and that the incidence of violence may have resulted as much from Communist pressures as from the authoritarian character of the traditional family.

586 Divorce and marriage figures released by the Communists are equally difficult to render meaningful because of gaps in statistics and the different time spans and categories which are given for the figures cited. For the nation as a whole, the number of divorces was reported to have risen from 186,000 in 1950 (the last seven months of it under the new

23. C.B., 236, p. 5.